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556 generations.[3] These conditions accounted for the lack of a permanent ruling caste in China. There are definite ideals in traditional Chinese culture which conditioned the upward and downward mobility of the people within the social hierarchy.

B. Social Mobility

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428 The family ideal. Large families, especially of the extended type, were the ideal
618 in China.[4] However, in practice the ideal was limited by economic means. Primogeniture in China had been done away with long before the Manchu Dynasty (1644-1912). Land was divided equally among sons. After successive divisions, individual holdings became infinitesimally small. This contributed to the decline of the economic status of even the wealthiest families, particularly when land was the sole source of income.[5] On the other

3. Martin Yang, A Chinese Village, New York, 1945, p. 132; Francis Hsu, Under the Ancestors' Shadow, New York, Columbia University Press, 1948, p. 4.

4. Consult the chapter on The Family in this handbook.

5. "In the matter of inheritance, the general pattern observed for poor agriculturalists holds very well for the merchant group. Just as at the death of a farmer, there is a sharing of the property. In the agricultural situation, however, there seems to be greater fragmentation of the legacy, each son working his share more or less independently and with a minimum of combination.
(continued next page)

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hand, because of the existence of extended families and the clan structure, less fortunate members of these groups might be helped by relatives to gain a living or an education. A substantial amount of land was usually allotted to the communal family or clan for religious, educational, or charity purposes by illustrious members of the family or clan. Nepotism was simply a projection of the family ideal of mutual help among the members. Clan nepotism often accounted for a man's rise on the social and economic ladder. This practice contributed to the upward movement of poorer segments of the population who otherwise might never have advanced socially and economically in a relatively short period of time.

The scholar ideal. Learning was much esteemed, especially when combined with wealth. The prestige of the wealthy was never complete until their wealth was adorned with culture. Indication of respect for learning was common in China, as typified by the saying: "Although your children may be of low intelligence, you as parents should make them

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5. (continued) In the merchant situation there is somewhat more cohesion among the heirs, who often work the inherited enterprise as partners." Fried, op. cit., p. 52.